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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL  
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TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU PREL KPAO  
SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2009

In Today's Papers

**Turkey's Media Mogul Slammed with Record-High Tax Fine**  
All media outlets report on their front pages that the Ministry of Finance has issued a "record-breaking" tax evasion fine against the media giant Dogan Media Group. Dogan Holding is the publisher of some of the country's leading newspapers such as Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Vatan and Posta. The media group also owns three leading television stations - Kanal D, CNNTurk and Star, along with other periodicals. Papers owned by Dogan Media Group sharply criticize the fine. Mainstream Posta headlines, "A Terrible Punishment," while mainstream Hurriyet calls it, "The World's Most Unprecedented Fine." Mainstream Milliyet also headlines, "A Punishment Unlike Anything the World Has Seen Before." Liberal Radikal headlines, "Unprecedented Punishment." Meanwhile, pro-government papers carry less sensational headlines that specifically target the man behind the Dogan Media Group, media mogul Aydin Dogan. Islamist-oriented Zaman headlines, "A Record High Penalty for (Aydin) Dogan," and Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak headlines, "Aydin Dogan Gets a Record-High Fine." Mainstream pro-government Sabah headlines, "An Historic fine for Dogan.

Dogan Holding announced the Finance Ministry has fined the Dogan Media Group 3.75 billion TL (2.52 billion USD) for "tax irregularities" dating between the years 2005 and 2007. The Dogan company denied the charges and said they would use all legal means possible in order to challenge the decision. Nevertheless, mainstream Sabah reports, "Dogan stock went down twenty percent at market closing yesterday after the announcement of the fine." Milliyet and Vatan carried immediate reactions to this decision from the International Press Institute and the main opposition party CHP.

"Although IPI can make no comment on the substance of the penalty, events in the early part of this year, which saw Prime Minister Erdogan wage a war of words against the media, leave in doubt the intent behind this fine", said IPI Director David Dodge in a press release. "IPI has a genuine concern that the impetus behind the original tax investigation was more motivated by political and personal calculations rather than a genuine desire to carry out a full and fair investigation of the Dogan media group's financial circumstances." Opposition party CHP leaders Onur Oymen, Ahmet Ersin and Akif Hamzacelebi described the fine as "a pressuring

mechanism" against Dogan Media and called the government to "respect the EU's press freedom criteria" instead of engaging in "efforts to eliminate non pro-government voices."

Cumhuriyet notes "The magnitude of the fine is such that the entire market value of Dogan Holding will not cover the cost of the penalty." Cumhuriyet also notes the Dogan Publishing group received another tax-related fine last year and has already turned over a percentage of its shares to the Finance Ministry as 'credit insurance.'

Meral Tamer noted in mainstream Milliyet: "The Finance Ministry's decision comes with a clear message. Any media organs are doomed to be destroyed if they continue to pursue a non pro-government tone. In addition, Erdogan has proven that he is not afraid to use state resources to force the country to submit to his power. No business concern in Turkey is safe anymore. The PM's goal is to force media baron Aydin Dogan out of the media and to create a media environment in which no one questions him."

Metin Munir of mainstream Milliyet wrote: "With a few small exceptions, the outlets owned by Dogan Media are the only press actors who criticize the government. The Prime Minister wants to take control over Dogan Media by the time the next elections come around. This fine is an attempt to silence opposition to the government in the media. The PM knows that opposition voices in the parliament pose no threat to him, but he seeks to silence all opposition voices, including those in the media."

Oray Egin wrote in mainstream Aksam: "This is an indication of

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psychological warfare initiated by the government against opposition voices. The latest is an effort to hit the last nail into Dogan Media Group's coffin and take full control over the media. The government's understanding of the concept of free and democratic media is a single-voiced media."

Ahmet Altan wrote in Taraf: "According to economists in my newspaper, Dogan Holding has committed violations. However, Prime Minister Erdogan is also violating the law by making a selective punishment without punishing all the others who commit tax fraud."

Seven Turkish Soldiers Killed in Fighting with the PKK  
Media outlets report that on Tuesday, six Turkish soldiers were killed in clashes with the PKK terrorists near Eruh town in the province of Siirt, and another soldier was killed in fighting near Cukurca town in the province of Hakkari on the border with Iraq. Papers comment the attacks came as the ruling AKP government was working on a plan to resolve Turkey's Kurdish question. Prime Minister Erdogan told reporters late Tuesday the killings would not block the Kurdish 'democratic initiative' launched by his government. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet headlines, "The PKK Listens to No Initiative as Terrorist Attacks Kill More Soldiers."

Torrential Rains Kill Dozens

Media outlets report heavy floods hit Turkey's Marmara region, killing six people in Tekirdag province and one in Istanbul, with several people missing. Floods carried away thousands of vehicles into the sea. Papers say torrential rains turned the places near Istanbul into a disaster zone, causing destruction in Silivri, Catalca and Golen by flooding hundreds of houses and business places.

CNN-Turk television reported on Wednesday morning that flash floods killed eight people in the suburbs of Istanbul. Meteorology officials said thunderstorms were expected to continue until Saturday, adding that the rains will be heavier Wednesday.

Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak daily points out that no one was hurt by torrential rains which continued in Europe for weeks, but Turkey's "infrastructure" has yielded to a one-night shower. Leftist Taraf and business daily Referans say the catastrophe had been a result of the failure of state authorities to pay attention to meteorology warnings for flash floods.

#### Karzai Is Winning, But... (NTV)

Media outlets note that the first round of vote counting indicates Afghan President Hamid Karzai is winning, despite widespread claims of voter fraud and the invalidation of thousands of votes at hundreds of polling stations. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "As the controversy over the presidential elections continues, President Karzai has won the first round of results." Mainstream Milliyet reports, "As the controversy continues around the presidential elections, it was announced that 200,000 votes were invalidated due to fraud." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports, "The Votes Will Be Recounted, But Karzai is in the Lead." Liberal Radikal reports "Karzai Wins In the First Round Counting in the Flawed Elections." Mainstream NTV reports, "Karzai Is Winning, But..." and the network notes, "votes from 600 polling stations are being invalidated."

#### Kunduz Aftermath

Media outlets note the Taliban has responded to the NATO airstrikes in Kunduz by appealing to the UN and international human rights groups at the same time they launched a revenge attack on the Kabul airport. In, "The Taliban Is Taking Refuge under International Law," mainstream Milliyet asks "Is the Taliban changing its policy?" as, "The Taliban has requested that international human rights organizations and the UN investigate the NATO airstrike in Kunduz against two fuel tankers in which civilians were killed." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports in "The Taliban Take Revenge on the Airport," that Taliban Spokesperson Zabiullah Mucahid said the attack on the Kabul airport "targeted a NATO convoy" following what

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the paper calls, "A NATO airstrike that killed 90 people." Meanwhile, in a related article, leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reminds of the Taliban's terror tactics in, "A Taliban Lesson on the Way to School," and the paper notes, "The Taliban shot children on the way to school which killed four and injured six in northwestern Pakistan."

#### Obama's Speech to Schoolchildren

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports in "He Didn't Make Marxist Propaganda," that "Republicans are accusing President Obama of espousing Marxist propaganda during his speech to American schoolchildren this week," but, "Obama's messages are that students should stay in school, do their homework, work hard, and keep their hands clean." Mainstream Milliyet jokes in the headline, "U.S. President Barack Obama's Frightening Speech: Wash Your Hands, Do Your Homework."

TV News (CNN Turk)

#### Domestic

- A 14-year old boy is sentenced to three years in prison for throwing stones at the police during an illegal rally in the southeastern city of Siirt.
- Health Minister Recep Akdag has warned that Turkey should be prepared for a rapid spread of swine flu over the coming months.
- International credit rating company JCR says Turkey needs to strike a new deal with the IMF.
- Industrial output figures show that recovery in Turkey's economy will be slow, but industrialists are optimistic about the coming months.

#### World

- The Czech Republic and Liechtenstein have established diplomatic relations for the first time since World War II.
- A captain of a Turkish-operated cargo vessel, detained while trying to deliver fuel to Abkhazia, has been released by the Georgian court following the intervention of Foreign Minister Davutoglu.
- An article in the U.S. magazine GQ, which alleges that the Russian government was behind a series of apartment bombings that led to the

second Chechen war of 1999-2001, will not be distributed in Russia.

- A female Sudanese journalist, jailed for a month after being convicted of "dressing indecently" by wearing trousers, has been freed.

- A U.S. drone aircraft fires missiles into Pakistan's North Waziristan on the Afghan border, killing at least three militants.

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